

## 15 Points to Consider - New Year's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Saturday, 31 December 2011 19:06 - Last Updated Monday, 02 January 2012 10:39

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*Starting this month, my 15 Points to Consider is going to become a weekly column.*

*This week: the Minnesota Wild's top prospects, Chicago's hunt for a second line center, Cedric Desjardins, Matt Frattin, and how Crosby should be valued. Enjoy!*

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1. The Minnesota Wild have come crashing back to earth after a really strong start. They aren't as bad as they are playing right now, just as they aren't as good as they were playing earlier. The Wild have a solid duo of goaltenders, a decent group of forwards, but their defensive depth has been ravaged by injuries (the Brent Burns trade didn't help, either). However, they are set up pretty well for the foreseeable future? Why? Several very good prospects. The top five:

**Mikael Granlund** – the best fantasy prospect not currently in the NHL (among drafted players). Granlund is a wizard with the puck, and he'll be centering the second line in Minnesota next season.

**Charlie Coyle** – a big, strong power forward brought over from San Jose in the Burns/Setoguchi trade. He's already 6'2" and over 200 pounds, and he can probably add another 10-15 pounds of muscle. A future line mate for Granlund, perhaps? Coyle is probably a year or two away from making a fantasy impact.

**Zack Phillips** – Phillips is the Malkin to Jonathan Huberdeau's Crosby on the St. John Sea Dogs. Phillips is a really smart player. He's average sized and his skating is nothing to write home about, but he also possesses elite offensive instincts. Phillips will develop into a very good second line center. Probably two years off. Think Marc Savard (healthy).

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**Jason Zucker** – the captain of the American WJC team, Zucker plays a lot like Rangers captain Ryan Callahan. A really good prospect with upside as a second line multi-purpose player.

**Jonas Brodin** – the only defenseman among the five, Brodin is really smart and a good puck mover (although his stats don't reflect it). Minnesota needs a few long-term top four guys, and he's the best they have in the system. He's getting top minutes as an 18-year-old in the SEL – pretty impressive.

2. Bobby Ryan is either really upset at having to stay in Anaheim, or he's injured. Doesn't have the same jump he has had in the past, and he is forcing plays that usually come naturally to him (although he was very good the other night against Vancouver).

3. The Blackhawks have tried a few players at the second line center position. Patrick Sharp is better on the wing, and the same goes for Patrick Kane. The team prefers Dave Bolland in a third line role. Brandon Pirri has been tried there as well, and he may be a long-term fit. Ideally the team would add a proven center via trade or free agency, but in the era of the salary cap, great teams usually have at least one roster hole. Marcus Kruger played a few games in the spot before suffering a concussion. Pirri is the best bet to assume the role long term, but I think Chicago makes a move either at the deadline or next summer to address the issue.

Pirri looks completely comfortable at the NHL level (and not only that, but lining up with Sharp and Marian Hossa to boot) which is no easy feat for any rookie. He'll bounce back and forth

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between the AHL and NHL for the rest of the season.

4. If I was hired tomorrow to run the Blue Jackets, here is what I would do:

- Fire Scott Arniel (maybe not his fault, but too many late game collapses)
- Overpay if necessary for long-term stability in goal (Cory Schneider the first target)
- Trade Rick Nash, build around Carter, Umberger, and Johansen, among others. Nash is a really talented player, but he's never going to reach his peak potential playing in Columbus. He lacks drive and consistency, and it must be incredibly frustrating for Jackets fans to see in excel internationally.

5. Cedric Desjardins is tearing up the AHL this season. He's currently playing for Colorado's affiliate in Lake Erie. Desjardins has had success at the AHL level before, back in 2009-10 with Guy Boucher's Hamilton Bulldogs. He's still only 26, and figures to get an NHL shot next season if he keeps his level of play up through the remainder of the season.

The last goaltender Justin Goldman sold me on was Richard Bachman. He came in and stole the backup gig in Dallas with a stellar few weeks. I know Goldman also really likes Desjardins.

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6. How would you go about valuing Sidney Crosby in your hockey pool right now? Do you entertain the thought of trading him while he has any value? (If you are in the camp that thinks he'll never be the same again.) Do you hold on to him, not wanting to sell low on the best hockey player on the planet, in case he makes a triumphant return once again?

I own Crosby in one of my keeper leagues, and I have received a few trade offers for him. None have been all that interesting to me. I think it helps that my team is probably one I am going to retool, as without Crosby I don't have much of a shot at winning this season. If I were looking to contend, I would likely be more interested in moving him. I'm holding firm and hoping for the best, but at this point the news is bleak, at best.

7. I don't get to see Toronto play more than once a week (thanks to Hockey Night in Canada), but I am continually impressed with Matt Frattin's game. His production hasn't been great (four goals and eight points in 33 games through Wednesday), but he has shown flashes of why people believe he'll be a good top six forward. The most noticeable part of his game is speed, and he uses it quite effectively. Off the rush, he can create separation from many NHL defensemen.

He's also a smart player defensively. Usually, young forwards that understand the defensive zone have an easier time figuring out the offensive zone (coaches trust them more, they receive more ice time, and so on).

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8. [I wrote my review](#) on Jason Farris' masterpiece Behind the Moves last month – I received the book as a Christmas gift, and have really, really enjoyed it. Great profiles on GM's through league history (Fred Shero was an interesting guy, and everyone really does hate Mike Keenan), and a ton of insights on how negotiations and trade talks actually go down.

Since that time, [Jason has been hired to work for the Dallas Stars](#) in a Business Development & Development role.

The book is expensive, but the coverage is immense, unique, and incredibly insightful. I can't recommend it enough.

9. Been reading a lot of interesting articles on [Farnam Street](#), a blog covering many topics (most notably human psychology). The 'recency effect' is when we tend to view something more favourably because it is fresh in our minds. Looking at one of my previous columns from two years ago, [I can see the recency effect in full force](#).  
Matt Calvert, for all of the good parts of his game, is not even close to being a top 10 fantasy hockey prospect. At the time, he was playing like it.

10. The Shea Weber concussion is bad news for Nashville fans, but it has presented an

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opportunity for Roman Josi, one of my favourite young players in the game. Josi is undersized but incredibly poised, strong on his skates, and quick. He has received comparisons to former Predator Kimmo Timonen, and they aren't unearned. Even if Nashville manages to keep both Weber and Ryan Suter, I'd expect Josi to be playing a big role with the team next year.

His offensive game may not be on display right away (depends on how the power play units are structured), but he has 40+ point upside.

11. If you are out of contention in your keeper league pool, it may be worth taking a gamble on Alex Radulov. The downside is a wasted roster spot for a non-active player (if you can stash him on the farm, even better), and the upside is an elite offensive talent if/when he returns to the NHL.

12. Alex Edler is currently on pace for 60 points and almost 250 shots on goal. The Canucks gambled correctly that he would be ready to step into a prime time offensive role on the league's most dangerous power play. He still struggles with consistency at times, but his bad games are becoming increasingly rare.

13. The more I watch the Sharks, the more I think it is time for them to move one of Marleau or Thornton. Their most consistently dangerous forwards are Joe Pavelski and Logan Couture. Marleau seems disinterested to me, while Thornton hasn't really adjusted his game over the last few seasons. If the Sharks are bounced from the playoffs again this year, it may be time to

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retool things a bit.

14. I own Harding, Schneider, and Jonathan Bernier in one of my keeper leagues. There are at least a half-dozen NHL teams that would desperately love to add a goaltender they can build around for the long term. Sticking with my Radulov advice from above... if you are struggling in your pool this year, target great young goalies playing secondary roles. A short term sacrifice (not many starts) for a long term gain (once they are traded).

15. [My first piece for DobberHockey was officially published just under five years ago](#) . It's been a really fun ride, thanks to the great people that make this site the first place I come to before and after 'work' each day! All the best in 2012!